



Press release

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**May 13, 2003
Release #03-02**

ABCDF reports alarm in neutralization facility

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Army and Bechtel Aberdeen teams are looking into why a low level of mustard agent vapor was detected Monday, May 12, at 12:13 p.m. inside the east end of the process neutralization building of the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility.

The presence of a very low level of mustard agent vapor was detected by a monitor immediately adjacent to an empty mustard container that had been cleared for removal from a drain station. The nine workers in the immediate area put on their masks and evacuated the building. There were no injuries, and there was no danger to anyone outside the facility. Engineering controls in the form of the “cascade” ventilation system were in place to ensure no vapor could be released outside the facility.

Readings from other monitors in the area were analyzed to determine if mustard agent vapor was present in other parts of the enclosed work area. The room alarm, 10 feet from the container, indicated the presence of no agent vapor; the back-up alarm, located three feet from the container, also indicated no agent vapor. The signal came from a passive line located an inch or less from the end of the container, which detected very low levels of agent. Workers in Level B protective gear, which includes protective mask and clothing, returned the container to the drain station and sealed it in place for further monitoring. The area was cleared and employees returned to work within hours of the alarm.

The facility began neutralization on April 23, and continues its gradual ramp-up. Decontaminating the ends of the containers in the drain station has proven to require more time and effort than originally anticipated, and workers are refining the techniques required to clear the containers without undue delay.

For details on the neutralization process, call the Edgewood Chemical Stockpile Outreach Office, 410-676-6800, or go to the Chemical Materials Agency (Provisional) Web site, www.cma.army.mil, for information and fact sheets.